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A study of an online adaptation of an off campus adult student survey

Benjamin J. Stenson

Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in [Counseling and Student Development](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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A STUDY OF AN ONLINE ADAPTATION OF AN OFF
CAMPUS ADULT STUDENT SURVEY

STENSON

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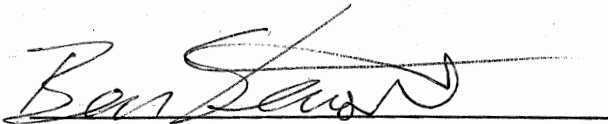
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A Study of an Online Adaptation of an Off Campus Adult Student Survey

(TITLE)

BY

Benjamin J. Stenson

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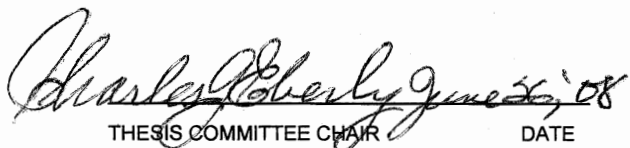
Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

August 2008

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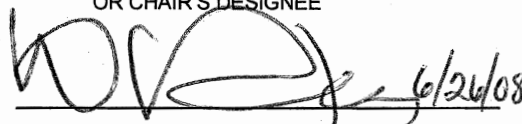
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A Study of an Online Adaptation of an Off Campus Adult Student Survey

by

Benjamin J. Stenson

B.A. Eastern Illinois University 1999

Submitted to the Department of Counseling and Student Development

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Science in College Student Affairs

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ABSTRACT

The School of Continuing Education (SCE) at Eastern Illinois University offers evening and weekend courses for returning adult students at a variety of off campus locations. Program assessment conducted in 1988, 1993, 1997, and 2002 used an off campus adult student survey administered by traditional means. Since these program assessment administrations, the proportion of classes offered through traditional off campus classroom instruction has lowered in relation to classes that are technology delivered.

It has become important to assess technology delivered instructional programs as well. The original adult student survey (Schrock, 1988) was adapted into an on-line version in order to gather responses of students enrolled in Internet courses. This survey was posted on the SCE Web site in several accessible locations. Students were notified about the survey by their instructors, through notifications on a student Listserve, and through a batch email to all students enrolled in Eastern Illinois University School of Continuing Education courses. Instructors were asked to direct their students to the SCE Website and to the On-line survey link.

On-line participant response ($n = 368$) was comparable to past hard-copy administration response rates and the information was found to be useful in overall program assessment. The majority of SCE students reported satisfaction with the time and location of current off campus courses, consistent with results from previous administrations. They indicated a need for more Internet courses and cohort programs.

A full comparison study of all five surveys was not possible due to the loss of original data in an April 2004 fire. Future SCE program evaluations should include a mixed methods design that includes administration of the Internet survey along with volunteer focus groups at selected off-campus sites. The present study included a literature review of nontraditional adult student program assessments. This study was conducted with the support of The Eastern Illinois University School of Continuing Education and is the culmination of a long history of program assessments within the school. The information gathered from the Internet adaptation of this survey was useful for program planning and internal marketing purposes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Definition of Terms.....	3
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
Adult Nontraditional Students.....	5
Technology and Higher Education.....	6
Web Surveys Vs. Paper Surveys.....	7
Summary.....	8
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	10
Design of the Study.....	10
Population and Sample.....	10
History of the Instrument.....	11
Data Collection.....	13
Treatment of the Data.....	14
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	15
Decision to Attend University.....	15
Decision to Attend Eastern Illinois University.....	23
Current Off Campus Programs.....	27
Additional Services Desired by Adult Learners.....	43
Student Information.....	45
Additional Comments.....	47
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS...	50

Discussion of Data by Survey Topic.....	50
Conclusions.....	53
Recommendations.....	53
REFERENCES.....	55
Appendix A: 2007 SCE Survey.....	58
Appendix B: Faculty Letter.....	68

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Reasons Considered by Adult Students for Returning to College.....	17
TABLE 2: Importance Ranking of Reasons Adults Return to College.....	19
TABLE 3: Educational Goals of Adult Students to Complete in Five Years.....	21
TABLE 4: Adult Students Enrolled in Educational Programs.....	22
TABLE 5: Factors Influencing Adult Students Decisions to Enroll at EIU.....	23
TABLE 6: How Adult Students Initially Learned Of Eastern's Off Campus Courses/Programs.....	26
TABLE 7: Adult Students' Rating of Various Aspects of Eastern's Continuing Education Programs.....	27
TABLE 8: Adult Student Enrollment by Location.....	31
TABLE 9: Farthest Distance Adult Students Reported they Commute and are Willing to Commute.....	33
TABLE 10: Adult Student Ranking of Course Delivery Method.....	34
TABLE 11: Adult Students Indicated the Information they would like to have Available.....	36
TABLE 12: When is the Best Time for you to Attend Class on Weekdays.....	37
TABLE 13: Adult Students' Interest in Weekend Class Times.....	38
TABLE 14: Adult Students' Interest in Courses in Different Formats.....	39
TABLE 15: Important Factors Considered by Adult Students in Determining the Number of Classes to Enroll in.....	40
TABLE 16: Importance of EIU Offering Additional Courses in the Following Subjects.....	42

TABLE 17: Which of These Additional Services Would you use if they were Available.....	44
TABLE 18: Present Age and Gender.....	45
TABLE 19: Employment Status.....	46
TABLE 20: Major Source of Funding for Education.....	47

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The present study was designed to determine if a previously validated School of Continuing Education (SCE) Adult Student Survey (Schrock, 1990) could be adapted to an Internet delivered instrument capable of gathering data from EIU students enrolled in a variety of classes including face to face, online, and hybrid (both face to face with some on-line interaction) formats. Previous data collection conducted by paper and pencil survey packets was sufficient to assess the needs of students enrolled in traditional face-to-face (FTF) off campus format courses, but administration of paper packets would not suffice for gathering information from students enrolled in technology delivered sections. Administering the survey via the Internet was intended to gather information from all continuing education sections, and provide the same level of reliable data as the paper and pencil survey had in past administrations. Some minor changes to the original survey were necessary, but the on-line measure maintained the original goal of addressing the following questions: How well do existing services meet needs—i.e., how do current students evaluate educational services and, what changes will make the educational services better (Schrock 1990)? Specifically, this study was conducted to:

- 1) determine that the student response rate for the online adult student survey was sufficient to be used as an assessment tool for the SCE.
- 2) determine that the data collected from the online survey was consistent with data collected from the previously administered paper and pencil survey.
- 3) gather data from those enrolled in the SCE's technology delivered sections

- 4) develop strategies to improve and market EIU's continuing education programs.

The Eastern Illinois University School of Continuing Education (SCE) has offered off campus and technology delivered courses to nontraditional adults for over 20 years. Previous administrations of the Adult Student Survey were conducted by use of a questionnaire and scantron sheet (SCE). This paper and pencil method excluded the increasing number of students enrolled solely in Internet courses, and excluded assessing Internet course formats. As the course delivery systems changed and technology allowed for adult students to have even greater access to higher education, it was necessary to adapt the original adult student survey to an online format.

In spring 2007 there were a total of 890 enrollments in EIU SCE technology delivered courses (SCE statistical document, Spring 2007 Technology Delivered Courses Enrollment and Residency). The majority of enrolled students took a combination of Internet and traditional classroom courses. The minority of students who were not enrolled in Internet courses still had access to the survey. There is a nationwide market for online education and numerous accredited institutions offer a variety of degree programs (Draves, 2001; Pusser, Breneman, Gansneder, Kohl, Levin, Milam and Turner 2007). For the EIU SCE to remain competitive in this rapidly growing area of higher education, administrators must continue to adequately assess SCE programs and be able to do so reliably. The present study was designed to determine how readily the adult student survey could be administered as an online measure for both the technology delivered and traditional face-to-face classroom programs. Recommendations were made

to improve the quality of the data retrieved from the survey and to correct for any limitations attributed to the online survey administration.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions of terms were stipulated.

Adult Student – Adult students are typically any student 25 and older and / or a student with the majority of their mental, physical, and financial resources required by responsibilities other than academics. Other criteria include living off campus, working either part or full time, and having children.

Off campus classes – For credit courses offered at locations other than EIU's main campus are considered off campus classes. There were twelve off campus locations including three departmental cohort programs offered by the EIU SCE at the time the survey was administered (Spring 2007).

Technology Delivered / Internet courses – For credit courses in which instructors and students participated via an Internet connection are defined as technology delivered / Internet courses.

The paper and pencil version of the SCE Adult Student Survey as conducted by Schrock (1988) has been a useful tool for SCE program assessment. This study is designed to determine if the Schrock survey can be adapted to an on line instrument in order to reach those students who take only Internet courses, while maintaining the level of useful information for the in person off campus courses offered by the SCE. Chapter II will include the literature review regarding adult nontraditional students, technology in higher education, and the usefulness of Web surveying techniques compared to

traditional paper surveys. Chapter III will describe the methodology, Chapter IV reports the results, and Chapter V will end the present study with Conclusions and Recommendations.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Adult Nontraditional Students

Adult nontraditional students currently account for as much as 50 % of students enrolled in higher education with the potential to exceed the number of traditional aged 18 – 24 year old students in the near future (Brown, 2002; Stein & Wanstreet, 2006). According to the U.S. Department of Education National Center For Education Statistics (2002), nearly three-quarters of undergraduates met at least one of the criteria necessary to be considered a “nontraditional” student. Bean and Metzner (1985) identified three main factors in determining nontraditional student status. Nontraditional students live off campus, are older and more mature, and typically enroll part time. Adult students pose characteristics which differentiate them from traditional student development theory in regard to institutional socialization (Gatz & Hirt, 2000). Adult nontraditional students have more responsibilities outside of their educational goals than do traditional age 18-25 students. The need to balance work, family, and school can be daunting for nontraditional students. Their lack of connection with the university can be a barrier in access to institutional resources such as interacting with faculty and student affairs staff and access to the library (Gatz & Hirt, 2000). Providing educational programs and support for this growing population of college students presents both an opportunity and challenge for higher education institutions.

More than 60 % of colleges and universities are addressing the needs of adult students by offering distance education programs in a multitude of academic areas

(elearners.com 2008, retrieved November 11, 2007, from www.elearners.com).

However, in an analysis of over 1600 articles in eight peer-reviewed higher education journals published between 1990 and 2000, only 2% of the articles published were studies relating to nontraditional students (Donaldson, Townsend & Thompson 2004).

The obvious bias toward research on traditional students compared to non-traditional students will need to be addressed if United States colleges and universities wish to remain globally competitive (Pusser, Breneman, Gansneder, Kohl, Levin, Milam and Turner 2007). The authors of *Returning to Learning*, a report for the Lumina Foundation for Education, stated that

[W]ith a committed and informed approach, we can help realize the vast educational potential of America's adult learners and thus substantially benefit individuals, families, communities and the national economy. If we ignore the problem, we will further limit our adult citizens and erode the vitality of our essential institutions (Pusser et al., 2007, p. 1)

Technology and Higher Education

The Internet has proven to be more than adequate for providing educational programs to populations whose access to a traditional classroom is limited. William Draves, President of LERN, the world's largest lifelong learning association, estimated that in this century 50% of all learning and education will be conducted by some means of online instruction (Draves, 2001). An increasing number of people use the Internet and in 2000 an estimated 55 million people used the Internet daily in the U.S. alone (Pew Internet and American life, 2000). In fact, twenty-two percent of Americans 65 and older

use the Internet, and once they become active they are just as active as younger users (Fox Internet & America life, 2004).

College students, more than any other population, use the Internet. Eighty-six percent of college students have used the Internet compared to 59% of the population as a whole (Jones, 2002). Specifically, Jones (2002) found that 59% of all college classes used some form of email. A study conducted by a southeastern university which included survey responses from both students and faculty regarding Web based instruction showed that not only did students expect to participate in technology delivered instruction in the future, but 99% of the faculty responded that they would continue to incorporate technology delivered material into their courses (Daugherty & Funke, 1998). Developing a valid method of technology delivered and distance learning program assessment for adult students has become a necessary area of research.

Web Surveys Vs. Paper Surveys

There is much debate as to whether Web surveys yield the same quantity and quality of information as standard paper and pencil assessment methods. Manfreda, Bosnjak, Berzelak, Hass, Vehovar (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 45 comparisons between the response rates of Web surveys to that of other survey models. They found an overall average of 11% lower response rate for Web surveys. They determined three main factors that influenced the response rate. First, the addition of focus groups or panel members decreased the difference in response rate to only 9%. Second, they found that the number of contacts was inversely correlated with the response rate. The larger the number of contacts, the lower the response rate for Web surveys. The final, and most intriguing, factor that Manfreda et al. (2008) found which influenced response rate was

the solicitation mode of the survey. They found that the overall survey response was higher if the solicitation mode was congruent with the survey mode. This suggested that those who are online and using the Web were more likely to respond to a Web survey than those who are more familiar with mail surveys.

The notion that a person is more likely to respond to a Web survey if they have access and are familiar with information found on the Web is supported. Tomsic, Hendel and Martoss (2000) compared the response rates of college students to a Student Experiences Survey in 1997 and 1999. The students were given the choice of responding to either a Web survey or a paper and pencil format. When given a choice the students did respond to the paper format significantly more often. However, there were some interesting results. Across all of the survey groups, undergraduates and graduate students who had indicated that they regularly accessed information on the Web were significantly more likely to respond to the Web version of the survey. Additionally, the percent of students responding to the Web survey doubled between 1997 and 1999 (Tomsic, 2000). Given the increased use of the Internet in 2008 compared to a decade earlier, the proportion of college students comfortable with Web-based surveys is no doubt much higher today.

Summary

Adult nontraditional students are a growing population in higher education (Brown, 2002; Stein & Wanstreet, 2006) which has largely been overlooked by mainstream educational research (Donaldson, Townsend & Thompson 2004). Colleges and universities are providing technology delivered and distance education courses to meet the needs and increase the access of nontraditional students to the education they

desire. Both students and college and university faculty agree that Web based technology will continue to be utilized in education (Daugherty & Funke, 1998). Surveys administered on the Web generally have lower response rates than other methods, but are better at accessing a population that is already using the Web for other purposes (Manfreda, et al., 2008). Web based surveys should become a useful approach to carry out program assessments for the SCE program.

Chapter III will describe the methodology used for the purposes of the present study. Chapter IV includes a comparison of the current Internet survey responses to the older paper-and-pencil responses reported by Schrock (1988). Chapter V completes the thesis with a discussion of conclusions drawn from a comparison of the paper-and-pencil and on-line methods of survey administration, and offers a series of recommendations with regard to future SCE program evaluation methodology and on-line administration of surveys.

Chapter III

Methodology

Design of the Study

The focus of this study was to determine the comparative usefulness of the SCE Student Survey delivered via the Web compared to a paper-and-pencil format. Using an Internet version of the survey gave the SCE the ability to include the addition of Internet courses, as well as make the data collection process more efficient and cost effective. Schrock (1988) created the original *Looking Toward the Future* survey to determine the level of satisfaction of adults enrolled in continuing education courses at EIU. The data collected were used to evaluate current practices and make recommendations for program improvement, and for internal marketing practices within the EIU SCE administration.

Population and Sample

The target population for the present study remained the same as previous administrations of the survey, all adult students enrolled in continuing education sections of EIU courses. These offerings included off campus, Internet, and some on campus evening and weekend format courses. In an effort to determine if the Internet version of the survey yielded the same level of useful information as previous surveys, it was necessary to duplicate the sampling procedure used in prior surveys as much as possible. Schrock (1988) sent letters with instructions and survey packets to the instructors of off campus courses. Survey packets were distributed to 47 instructors via campus mail and U.S. mail. Instructors were to administer the survey during their class and collect the survey packets for return to the SCE.

The current study also sent letters to every off campus course instructor including those teaching Internet courses. These letters asked faculty to direct their students to the survey which was made available on the SCE Web site (Appendix B). Unlike Schrock's earlier procedure, instructors could not be asked to administer the survey in LTF sections. Campus regulations for the protection of human subjects no longer permit administration of non-class related surveys during instructional time (Charles G. Eberly, personal communication, November 11, 2007). During the Spring 2007 semester there were a total of 1,846 students enrolled in off campus and Internet courses through the SCE. The survey was made available during the time period of January 17th through March 17th 2007.

History of the instrument

The SCE Adult Student Survey was originally designed by Schrock (1988).

A survey instrument was designed by following Dillman's Total Design Method (1978), incorporating ideas of Sudman and Bradburn (1983), DiSilvestro (1987), Smith (1985) and Cross (1979). In addition, examples of surveys conducted by LaCalle (1981) and Piatt & Seybert (1981) were used as guides in the construction of the final instrument (Schrock, 1988, p. 31).

Subsequent administrations of the survey have demonstrated that it was indeed a useful tool in program assessment and for internal marking purposes for the SCE programs. Versions of the survey were used in 1988, 1994, 1997, and 2002. Minor changes to selected survey items were necessary over the years to account for new technology, program improvements, and changes in the student population. The only

other change to the instrument in the present study was the on-line manner in which it was administered.

Unfortunately, SCE records for the 1994, 1997, and 2002 re-administrations of the SCE Adult Student Survey were lost in a disastrous fire that struck Blair Hall in April 2004 (Daily Eastern News, 4/29/2004, p.1). The summary data retrieved from the available survey reports after the fire was limited to percent of the total survey respondents by item, and did not report the number of total survey respondents. It was not possible to recreate the original data for purposes of statistical analysis. As a result the present study was limited to a comparison of results from the original survey (Schrock, 1988) and the current survey results.

The survey used for the present study maintained the original division of survey items in six sections (Appendix A).

I. Decision to Attend University. Items in the first section were concerned with the student's decision to enroll in the university and their educational goals.

II. Decision to attend Eastern Illinois University. Why did students make the choice to attend EIU given the multitude of institutional choices available?

III. Current Off campus Programs. The third survey section was concerned with the opinions of adult students with regard to class format, location, and schedule.

IV. Additional Services Desired by Adult Learners. The fourth section asked what other SCE support services would be beneficial to adult students.

V. Student Information. The fifth section was added to collect general demographic information for purposes of data analysis.

VI. Additional Comments. The final section provided adult students an opportunity to add additional open ended comments.

Data Collection

The current survey was made available from January 17 through March 17, 2007 on the SEC Web site. A multi-method solicitation approach was used. First, letters describing the purpose of the survey were sent to every off campus and Internet course instructor by traditional mail. Additionally, an email message with the same information was sent to all off campus and Internet course instructors. These letters asked the instructors to direct their students to the SCE Web site where the link to the survey was located. Second, information regarding the survey was distributed via the SCE and Bachelor of Arts in General Studies (BGS) Listserve. Third, information and a link to the survey were added to the Spring 2007 SCE Newsletter. Lastly, a batch email letter describing the survey and asking students to participate was sent to all SCE students whose email address was on record with the SCE.

Upon opening the link to the survey, an opening statement describing the purpose of the survey, and thanking the student for participating, preceded the instrument. Completion of the survey was taken as implied consent to participate in the research. Copies of these letters and messages regarding the survey are found in Appendix 2. Data collection was maintained by the EIU Center for Academic Technology Support (CATS) office. Multiple submissions from individual respondents were distinguishable when viewing the data sets and were removed from data analysis.

Treatment of the data

Letters were sent to every off campus instructor with instructions to direct their students to the survey located on the SCE home page, the SCE newsletter and the BGS home page. Additionally, reminder emails were sent on three occasions to instructors of record. The cut off date for data collection was March 17, 2007. Completed surveys were automatically uploaded to the CATS server when submitted. Data were converted to frequency tables using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 15. Frequencies were converted into percentages in order to present a clear view of the responses to all survey items. A total of 368 SCE students completed the 2007 on-line survey out of the 1,846 students eligible to complete the instrument, for an overall response rate of 19.93%.

Summary

Chapter III has outlined the methodology used for the 2007 on-line survey, specified the population of students eligible to take the survey, and reported on the overall response rate. An explanation of the statistical treatment of the data was also included. Chapter IV will report on survey outcomes, and Chapter V will conclude the thesis with a discussion of the meaningfulness of the results, and offer suggestions for future survey development.

Chapter IV

Results

Survey Response Rate

A comparison of the data will be presented as frequency tables for each item from the Schrock 1988 paper survey and the Stenson 2007 Internet survey. The initial 1988 survey had a response rate of 84.6%. Having students present in a class where the instructor can physically hand out the instrument and preside over the student's participation was a major factor with respect to such a high overall response rate. As stated in Chapter III, the response rate for the 2007 Internet survey was 19.93%. The majority of adult students responding to the current Stenson 2007 survey were enrolled in either the BGS Degree program (n=144, 39.1%) or a graduate degree in Education (n=136, 37%). The remaining 23.9 % were enrolled in the Career & Organizational Studies (COS), Elementary Education, Graduate degree in Technology (MIT), and Graduate degree in business (MBA).

Survey Results by Section and Item

Using the sections of the instrument as an outline the findings were as follows. Item numbers are presented in the order they appeared in the Stenson 2007 survey.

I. Deciding to Attend University

The four questions in the first section focused on the reasons adults decided to return to college and to pursue their educational goals and expectations. From the Stenson 2007 survey "To satisfy personal interest/self enrichment" (Item 1.1) was the most frequent response (n=240, 65.2%). Respondents also indicated strong desire "To

improve my present job skills” (Item 1.3, n=174, 47.3%), “To prepare for a new career” (Item 1.5, n= 205, 55.7%), and “To qualify for advancement in my present job” (Item 1.6, n=193, 52.4%) (Table 1). A comparison of the current survey with the Schrock (1988) study indicated minimal percentage response differences by survey item among the majority of the survey items. From the Schrock 1988 survey “To satisfy personal interest/self enrichment” was also the most frequent response (Item 1.1, n=440, 80.7%). “To improve my present job skills” (Item 1.3, n=174, 47.3%), “To prepare for a new career” (Item 1.5, n= 205, 55.7%), and “To qualify for advancement in my present job” (Item 1.6, n=193, 52.4%) also showed high responses when compared to the Stenson 2007 survey (Table 1).

Table 1

Reasons Considered by Adult Students for Returning to College

Reason	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
To satisfy personal interest, self enrichment	240	65.2	440	80.7	-15.5%
To learn more about a new subject area	104	28.3	351	64.8	-36.5%
To improve skills in my present job	174	47.3	337	61.8	-14.5%
To challenge my ability to learn	109	29.6	346	63.5	-33.9%
To prepare for a new career	205	55.7	304	55.8	-.1%
To qualify for advancement in my present job	193	52.4	327	60.0	-7.6%
To meet new people	30	8.2	152	27.9	-19.7%
To prepare for retirement	48	13.0	117	21.5	-8.5%

When students were asked to rank the reasons they considered returning to college, they indicated that items related to occupational growth such as, "To prepare for a new career" (Item 2.5, n=110 29.9%), and "To qualify for advancement in my present job" (Item 2.6, n=98 26.6%) were the most important considerations (Table 2) for both the original paper-and-pencil administration and the current on-line administration of the instrument.

Table 2

Importance ranking of reasons adults return to college

Reason	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
To satisfy personal interest, self enrichment	78	21.2	8	1.5	+19.7%
To learn more about a new subject area	8	2.2	14	26.0	-23.8%
To improve skills in my present job	9	2.4	38	7.0	-4.6%
To challenge my ability to learn	25	6.8	8	1.5	+5.3%
To prepare for A new career	110	29.9	129	23.7	+6.2%
To qualify for advancement in my present job	98	26.6	113	20.7	+5.9%
To meet new people	2	.5	2	.4	+1.1%
To prepare for retirement	9	2.4	7	1.3	+1.1%

The educational goals of the adult students surveyed have remained essentially the same since the Schrock (1988) study. In both studies over 50% of respondents indicated that they were interested in finishing a master's degree in the next five years. While only 46.2% (n=170) of students surveyed in the present study were currently enrolled in a graduate program 57.3% (n=211) stated that they had a goal of finishing a graduate degree within the next 5 years (Table 3). In 1988, Schrock reported that 51.9 % (n = 283) of respondents planned to complete a masters degree within the next five years.

Table 3

Educational Goals of Adult Students to Complete in Five Years

Goals	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
Complete Bachelors Degree	81	22.0	116	21.3	+.7%
Complete Educational Specialist	24	6.5	35	6.4	+.1%
Complete Masters Degree	211	57.3	283	51.9	+5.4%
Study for a Doctorate	29	7.9	33	6.1	+1.8%
Undecided	5	1.4	20	3.7	-2.3%
Not seeking a degree	2	.5	26	4.8	-4.3%
Other	14	3.8	10	1.8	+2%

Since the original study in 1988 there have been many changes to the size and scope of degree programs offered by the SCE. The Board of Governors (BOG) degree was renamed in 2005 to the Bachelor of Arts in General Studies (BGS) degree, and has since doubled in size. There was also an increase in the availability of degree programs. Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, Graduate Degree in Technology (MIT), and Graduate Degree in Business (MBA) were not available during the original Schrock

study. The majority of adult students responding to the current Stenson 2007 survey were enrolled in either the BGS Degree program (n=144, 39.1%) or a graduate degree in Education (n=136, 37%) (Table 4).

Table 4

Adult Students Enrolled in Educational Programs

Program	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		+/-
	no.	%	no.	%	
Bachelor of General Studies (BGS)	144	39.1	96	17.6	+21.5%
Graduate degree in Education (Ed. Admin., Elem. Ed., Counseling and Student Development)	136	37.0	206	37.8	-.8%
Career & Organizational Studies (COS)	13	3.5	102	18.7	-15.2%
Elementary Ed./ Bachelor of Science	23	6.3	-	-	-
Graduate Degree in Technology (MIT)	31	8.4	-	-	-
Graduate Degree in Business (MBA)	3	.8	-	-	-
Non-degree graduate	3	.8	70	12.8	-12%
Other	15	4.1	51	9.4	-5.3%

II. Decision to attend Eastern Illinois University

The items in section two referred to factors which influenced adult students' decision to enroll at EIU. The item rated most often as very important was location of classes (n=297, 80.7%) followed by availability of degree program (n=249, 67.7%). Items of least importance were recommendations of friends and talking with EIU faculty, staff, and students (n=11, 3%) and prior experience with EIU (n=13, 3.5%). These findings were congruent with those of Schrock (1988) (Table 5).

Table 5

Factors Influencing Adult Students' Decisions to Enroll at EIU, 1988 and 2007

Ratings					
	very important	somewhat important	neutral	somewhat unimportant	very unimportant
Location of classes					
(Stenson, 2008)	297 80.7%	53 14.4%	7 1.9%	7 1.9%	3 .8%
(Schrock, 1988)	447 82.0%	65 11.9%	11 2.0%	7 1.3%	10 1.8%
Cost of classes					
(Stenson 2007)	140 38.0%	161 43.8%	46 29.9%	16 4.3%	3 .8%
(Schrock, 1988)	168 30.8%	156 28.6%	77 14.1%	56 10.3%	81 14.9%

Factors Influencing Adult Students' Decisions to Enroll at EIU, 1988 and 2008
Continued

	Ratings				
	very important	somewhat important	neutral	somewhat unimportant	very unimportant
Availability of degree program					
(Stenson, 2008)	249 67.7%	110 29.9%	4 1.1%	4 1.1%	1 .3%
(Schrock, 1988)	419 76.9%	47 13.6%	30 5.5%	3 .6%	13 2.4%
Reputation of EIU					
(Stenson, 2008)	90 24.5%	181 49.2%	65 17.7%	24 6.5%	8 2.2%
(Schrock, 1988)	126 23.1%	207 38.0%	133 24.4%	36 6.6%	34 6.2%
Recommendations of friends					
(Stenson, 2008)	64 17.4%	149 40.5%	102 27.7%	41 11.1%	11 3.0%
(Schrock, 1988)	85 15.6%	167 30.6%	112 20.6%	75 13.8%	100 18.3%
Talking with EIU faculty, staff, or students					
(Stenson, 2008)	43 11.7%	136 37.0%	146 39.7%	30 8.2%	11 3.0%
(Schrock, 1988)	103 18.9%	144 26.4%	134 24.6%	66 12.1%	90 16.5%

Factors Influencing Adult Students' Decisions to Enroll at EIU, 1988 and 2008
Continued

	Ratings				
	very important	somewhat important	neutral	somewhat unimportant	very unimportant
Prior experience with EIU					
(Stenson, 2008)	57 15.5%	73 19.8%	190 51.6%	34 9.2%	13 3.5%
(Schrock, 1988)	90 16.5%	74 13.6%	122 22.4%	57 10.5%	188 34.5%

Adult students indicated in the Stenson data that they most often learned about Eastern's off campus courses/programs from friends, neighbors or relatives (n=154, 41.8%). Second and third were their employer (12%), and the SCE Web site (11.6%). Over 95% of adult students said they would choose EIU courses and programs again and they would recommend them to a friend.

A significant number of adult students indicated they learned from other sources (n=70, 19%). Local community colleges were named 26 times. Spoon River, Danville Area Community College and Parkland College were cited by name. Specifically, the EIU office at Parkland College was indicated 16 times. The Regional Office of Education and EIU employees were mentioned 21 times (Table 6).

Table 6

How did adult students initially learn of Eastern's off campus courses/programs?

Source	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
Web site	43	11.6			
Friends, neighbor or relative	154	41.8	166	30.5	+11.3%
Employer	45	12.3	54	9.9	+2.4%
Personal research	35	9.5	97	17.8	-8.3%
Eastern publication	9	2.4	—	—	—
Newspaper advertisement	1	.3	14	2.6	-2.3%
Radio advertisement	2	.5	0	0	+5%
Movie theater	0	0	—	—	—
Conference or institute	5	1.4	—	—	—
Other	70	19.0	77	14.1	+5.1%

III. Current Off Campus Programs

Adult students rated each of the various aspects of off-campus programs as “very good” or “good” with the exception of two areas. Both “helpfulness of the financial aid office” and “helpfulness of the Graduate School” were rated highest in the “no opinion” category. The highest rated aspect was “quality of classes” with ratings of 42.4% “very good” and 47.3% “good”. “Location of classes” was a close second with ratings of 58.2% “very good” and 31.3% “good”. “Variety of classes offered” was rated over 50% “very good” and “good” but it also had the highest ratings for “poor” (11.4%) and “very poor” (2.4%). All of these findings were in line with the Schrock 1988 study (Table 7).

Table 7

Adult Students' rating of various aspects of Eastern's continuing education programs

Aspect	2007 Rating				
	Very Good	good	no opinion	poor	very poor
Variety of classes offered					
(Stenson, 2008)	115 31.3%	170 46.2%	27 7.3%	42 11.4%	9 2.4%
(Schrock, 1988)	121 22.2%	268 49.2%	77 14.1%	65 11.9%	11 2.0%
Quality of classes offered					
(Stenson, 2008)	156 42.4%	174 47.3%	24 6.5%	9 2.4%	2 .5%
(Schrock, 1988)	227 41.7%	253 46.4%	48 8.8%	9 1.7%	8 1.5%

Adult Students' rating of various aspects of Eastern's continuing education programs
Continued

Aspect	2007 Rating				
	Very Good	good	no opinion	poor	very poor
<hr/>					
Location of classes					
(Stenson, 2008)	214 58.2%	115 31.3%	23 6.3%	8 2.2%	3 .8%
(Schrock, 1988)	352 64.6%	148 27.2%	28 5.1%	10 1.8%	2 .4%
Classroom facilities					
(Stenson, 2008)	153 41.6%	154 41.8%	41 11.1%	14 3.8%	1 .3%
(Schrock, 1988)	239 43.9%	228 41.8%	60 11.0%	14 2.6%	4 .7%
Time classes are scheduled					
(Stenson, 2008)	152 41.3%	165 44.8%	28 7.6%	13 3.5%	4 1.1%
(Schrock, 1988)	259 47.5%	229 42.0%	38 7.0%	9 1.7%	3 .6%
Length of class periods					
(Stenson, 2008)	104 28.3%	208 56.5%	38 10.3%	9 .4%	2 .5%
(Schrock, 1988)	196 36.0%	275 50.5%	55 10.1%	11 2.0%	3 .6%
Registration procedures					
(Stenson, 2008)	157 42.7%	140 38.0%	32 8.7%	25 .8%	9 2.4%
(Schrock, 1988)	222 40.7%	212 38.9%	67 12.3%	24 4.4%	15 2.8%

Adult Students' rating of various aspects of Eastern's continuing education programs
Continued

Aspect	2007 Rating				
	Very Good	good	no opinion	poor	very poor
Availability of accurate information					
(Stenson, 2008)	108 29.3%	175 47.6%	42 13.6%	30 .6%	9 .8%
(Schrock, 1988)	134 24.0%	238 43.7%	94 17.2%	57 10.5%	18 3.3%
Helpfulness of school SCE off campus program office					
(Stenson, 2008)	157 42.7%	113 30.7%	63 17.1%	24 .5%	4 1.1%
(Schrock, 1988)	188 34.5%	196 36.0%	109 20.0%	30 5.5%	18 3.3%
Helpfulness of financial aid office					
(Stenson, 2008)	58 15.8%	86 23.4%	190 51.6%	14 .8%	9 2.4%
Helpfulness of specific degree program/dept.					
(Stenson, 2008)	135 36.7%	116 31.5%	87 23.6%	22 6.0%	2 .5%
Helpfulness of graduate school					
(Stenson, 2008)	64 17.4%	61 16.6%	188 51.1%	7 1.9%	1 1.3%

The adult students surveyed in 2007 indicated that most of them attended class at Parkland College in Champaign (n=154, 41.8%). The Schrock (1988) study showed 39.4% of the adult students attended classes in Rantoul. The EIU School of Continuing Education office was moved to Parkland College in May of 1993 from Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul which was scheduled for closure later that year. Since that time, student enrollment has risen at this satellite site. Also of interest was that of the 62 students indicating they took classes at another location, 37 of them (10.1%) indicated they were only taking Internet courses (Table 8).

Table 8

Adult student enrolment by location

Location	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
Centralia	5	1.4	-	-	-
Champaign	154	41.8	-	-	-
Charleston	78	21.2	-	-	-
Chicago	1	.3	-	-	-
Danville	41	11.1	183	33.6	+22.5%
Decatur	45	12.2	39	7.2	+5.0%
Effingham	16	4.3	-	-	-
Fairfield	10	2.7	-	-	-
Flora	0	0	-	-	-
Mattoon	10	2.7	-	-	-
McLeansboro	1	.3	-	-	-
Mt. Carmel	0	0	-	-	-
Mt. Vernon	21	5.7	-	-	-
Mt. Zion	0	0	-	-	-
Olney	8	2.2	50	9.2	-9.0%
Pana	1	.3	-	-	-

Adult student enrolment by location Continued

Location	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
Rantoul	0	0	215	39.4	-39.4%
Robinson	5	1.4	-	-	-
Springfield	1	.3	-	-	-
Other	62	16.8	-	-	-

Almost a third (29.3%) of adult students surveyed traveled less than 15 miles one way to attend class. Only 37% traveled between 15 and 45 miles, but 47.3% reported that they would be willing to do so (Table 9).

Table 9

Farthest distance adult students reported they commute and are willing to commute

Distance	Stenson 2007				Schrock 1988				
	Distance traveled		Willing to travel		Distance traveled		Willing to travel		traveled
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	% +/-
Less than 15 miles	108	29.3	57	15.5	218	40.0	75	13.8	-15.5
15 to 30 miles	67	18.2	74	20.1	134	24.6	167	30.6	-8.4
31 to 45 miles	69	18.8	100	27.2	91	16.7	150	27.5	+2.1
46 to 60 miles	63	17.1	88	23.9	39	7.2	82	15.0	+9.9
More than 60 miles	40	10.9	37	10.1	52	9.5	54	9.9	+1.4

In-person classroom presentation in a convenient off campus location was the highest rated course delivery method (n=187, 50.7%). However all of the course delivery methods presented for student evaluation received high rankings. In fact, students were generally split in how the different delivery methods were ranked (Table 10). Forty-six percent of the students indicated they want a combination of in-person courses and Internet instruction, while 38.3% wanted instruction solely via the Internet.

Table 10

Adult student ranking of course delivery method

Course delivery method	Most/Desirable		Neutral		Least/Not Desirable	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
In-person classroom presentation on EIU campus	105	28.6	46	12.5	187	50.7
In-person classroom presentation in a convenient off campus location	187	50.7	51	13.9	108	29.3
Combination of Internet and class some instruction off campus	169	46	79	21.5	98	26.6
Instruction completely via Internet	141	38.3	91	24.7	111	30.2
Instruction completely via interactive television	122	33.1	54	14.7	153	41.6

“Course descriptions with requirements and assignments” (Item 17.1, n = 276, 75%) was ranked most often as a service adult students would like to have available. “Academic advising appointments” (Item 17.2, n=155, 42.1%) and “Admission to the university / payment of admission fees” (Item 17.3, n=146, 39.7%) were also highly ranked as desirable information services. “Chat rooms for non-traditional students, for personal or academic support” (Item 17.8) was ranked the lowest with only 10.1% of students indicating a desire for that service (Table 11).

Table 11

Adult students (2007) indicated the information services they would like available

Services	no.	%
Course descriptions with requirements & assignments	276	75
Academic advising appointments	155	42.1
Admission/fees	146	39.7
Virtual learning assistance center	133	36.1
Student/faculty learning communities	131	35.6
Faculty profiles	140	38.0
Financial aid	139	37.8
Non-traditional student chat rooms	87	23.6
Information for students w/ disabilities	37	10.1
Other	10	2.7

The majority of students (90.8%) reported that they found the current class meeting times acceptable. Students indicated that 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. was the most desirable time for class meeting time (n=117, 31.8%), followed by 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. (n=85, 23.1%) and 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. (n=77, 20.9). The least desirable time was 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. which had only 18 people indicate it was the best time to attend class (Table 12).

Table 12

When is the best time for you to attend class on weekdays?

Times	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
5:00 to 7:30 p.m.	77	20.9	98	18.0	+2.9%
5:30 to 8:00 p.m.	85	23.1	53	9.7	+12.4%
6:00 to 8:30 p.m.	117	31.8	123	22.6	+9.2%
6:30 to 9:00 p.m.	24	6.5	93	17.1	-10.6%
7:00 to 9:30 p.m.	18	4.9	102	18.7	-13.8%
Other	30	8.2	17	3.1	+5.1%

Adult students indicated that they were indeed interested in weekend class formats. Saturday morning (n=288, 78.3%) and Saturday afternoon (n=242, 65.8%) had the highest preference response rates. Weekday morning classes had the lowest preference response rate with only 12% of students reporting they desired classes at that time (Table 13).

Table 13

Adult students' interest in weekend class times

Time	2007 Response		1988 Response		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
Saturday morning	288	78.3	340	62.4	+15.9%
Saturday afternoon	242	65.8	178	32.7	+33.1%
Sunday afternoon	97	36.4	99	18.2	+18.2%
Monday – Wednesday 7:00 a.m.	44	12.0	-	-	-

Adult students preferred weekend classes (88.3%) most; however, cohort group classes and accelerated formats such as two-week and one-week course formats also received high ratings of 50% or more (Table 14).

Table 14

Adult student interest in courses offered in the following formats

Format	no.	%
Weekend classes	325	88.3
Two-week classes	345	66.6
One week classes (meets every day)	184	50
Cohort group classes	256	69.6

Survey respondents indicated that the most important factor when considering the total number of classes to enrolled in was the total number of credit hours (n=136, 37%). The second most important was the number of nights in class (n=150, 40.8%) and third most important was the cost of classes (n=167, 45.4%) (Table 15).

Table 15

Important factors considered by adult students in determining the number of classes to enroll in.

Factors	Most		2 nd Most		3 rd Most	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Total number of credit hours	136	37.0	97	26.4	103	28.8
Number of nights in class	126	34.2	150	40.8	60	16.3
Cost	82	22.3	87	23.6	167	45.4

The data collected in 2007 was congruent with the data collected by Schrock in 1988. Similarities included response rates being highest for courses in Education (Stenson 2007, n =163, 71.5%) (Schrock 1988, n=398, 78.0%) and Computer/Information technology (Stenson 2007, n= 239, 64.9%) (Schrock 1988, n=300, 55.1%). The data from both surveys showed that adult students needed courses offered in a variety of subjects. Of interest was a general increase in the desire of students for all courses with the exception of two. Desire for Education fell by 7.5%, and the desire for Math courses fell by 3.3 % (Table 16).

Table 16

Importance of EIU to offer additional courses in the following subjects

Subjects	Stenson 2007 Very/Important		Schrock 1988 Very/Important		+/-
	no.	%	no.	%	
Education	163	71.5	398	78.0	-7.5%
Computer/ Info. Technology	239	64.9	300	55.1	+9.8%
Business	175	47.6	244	44.8	+2.8%
Technology	222	60.4	-	-	-
Math	165	44.8	262	48.1	-3.3%
Psychology	192	52.1	-	-	-
Social Sciences/ History	183	49.7	238	43.7	+5.3%
Fine Arts/ Humanities	181	49.2	232	42.6	+6.6%
Public Relations	146	39.6	-	-	-
English	160	43.5	234	42.9	+0.6%
Foreign Languages	138	37.5	126	23.1	+14.4%
Physical Science	150	40.8	210	38.5	+2.3%
Life Science	154	41.8	181	33.2	+8.6%
Physical Education	88	23.9	96	17.6	+6.3%

IV. Additional Services Desired by Adult Learners

Adult students reported that they would most likely participate in career management (n=159, 43.2%) and financial aid (n=128, 34.8%) workshops. One hundred and forty-nine of the adults surveyed indicated that they are familiar with Podcasting, but only 88 thought it would be useful at this time (Table 17). A podcast is a series of digital-media files which are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers (retrieved 6/15/2008 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>). Faculty presentations can be recorded in podcasts and used within the distance learning programs offered through SCE.

Table 17

Which of these additional services would you use if they were available?

Service	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		+/-
	no.	%	no.	%	
Time management Workshop	123	33.4	250	45.9	-12.5%
Study skills Workshop	96	26.1	236	43.3	-9.9%
Tutors on site	113	30.7	132	24.2	+6.5%
Career management Workshop	159	43.2	305	56.0	-12.8%
Financial aid Workshop	128	34.8	213	39.1	-4.3%
Club/support group for Non-traditional students	124	33.7	136	25.0	+8.7%
Information regarding transfer to EIU main campus program	81	22.0	-	-	-
Day care	77	20.9	131	24.0	-3.1%
Are you familiar with Podcasting	149	40.5	-	-	-
Would Podcasting be useful	88	23.9	-	-	-

V. Student information

The age of the nontraditional adult students surveyed was evenly distributed with the highest response rate of 25 to 30 years old (n=75, 30.4%) and a total of 36.7% 30 years old and under, and 67.8% over thirty. The majority of survey respondents were female (n=267, 72.6%). Slightly more than one in every four respondents was male (Table 18).

Table 18

Present Age and Gender

Years old	Stenson 2007		Gender	Stenson 2007	
	no.	%		no.	%
Under 25	23	6.3	Male	95	25.8
25 to 30	75	30.4	Female	267	72.6%
31 to 35	65	17.7			
36 to 40	64	17.4			
41 to 45	53	14.4			
46 to 50	44	12.0			
Over 50	38	10.3			

The majority of the students surveyed in 2007 were employed full time (n=181, 76.4%). The Schrock study had remarkably similar results with 76.3% of students surveyed in 1988 working full time. The only noteworthy difference between surveys regarding the employment status of adult students was an increase of 11.7% in the number of full time students in 2007 (Table 19).

Table 19

Employment status

Employed	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		
	no.	%	no.	%	+/-
Full time 40+ hrs./week	181	76.4	416	76.3	+1.1%
Part time (less than 40 hrs./week	37	10.1	55	10.1	
Employed considering job change	12	3.3	-	-	-
Full time Student	51	13.9	12	2.2	+11.7%
Unemployed seeking employment	12	3.3	9	1.7	+1.6%
Unemployed not seeking employment	3	.8	0	0	+8%
Retired	3	.8			
Other	19	5.2	7	1.3	+4.1%

The majority of adult learners were paying for their education (n=140, 38%) from their personal savings. Over half were receiving government funding and 21% were borrowing the money to pay for their education (Table 20) via student loans.

Table 20

Major source of funding for education

Source	Stenson 2007		Schrock 1988		+/-
	no.	%	no.	%	
Personal Savings	140	38.0	217	49.7	-11.7%
Employer paid	53	14.1	57	10.5	+4.4%
Government funding	55	14.9	93	17.1	-2.2%
Loan	78	21.2	18	3.3	+17.9%
Assistantship	3	.8	2	.4	+.04%
Family member	20	5.4	30	5.5	-0.1%
Other	13	3.5	19	3.5	

VI. Additional comments

Only 21.5% of the adult students (n = 79) surveyed took the opportunity to make additional comments. The overall comments were favorable, examples of which follow.

"As a graduate of the BGS program and now an MOT student I cannot tell you how beneficial it was to have the EIU programs at Parkland. The weekend options on-line courses all made it possible for me to complete bachelor's and

continue with my Master's. Without EIU I would not have been able to complete either degree!"

"I'm very grateful that EIU brought classes to DACC otherwise I could have never made the commute to a college campus. Therefore I may have never got the opportunity to achieve my childhood dream of becoming a teacher. Thanks."

"I have been very satisfied with the cohort program. The instructors have been very helpful. I look forward to see what you add in the future."

Unfavorable comments were concerned with the availability of more weekend and online courses, and information regarding degree requirements. Specifically, the cohort of Education students in the Danville area was mentioned several times with regard to poor advisement and an apparent lack of adequate information regarding degree completion and course expectations. Examples:

"I am enrolled in a Cohort in the Special Ed. Dept.; I feel that more guidance is needed for students."; "I hope that in saying this someone will get us some good counseling and help up here in Danville soon."

Another emerging theme was the feeling that off campus students were treated as second class EIU students.

"We may only make it as far down to Danville, but we are Eastern students and we deserve the courtesy of being treated just like a regular Eastern student that is on campus."

“EIU needs to realize that non-traditional students generally do not live on or near campus so we are often times left "out of the loop" on important information. It is very frustrating because we are hard workers who truly WANT to be in class learning yet we are not made to feel part of the university because we are not traditional college coeds.”

Summary

The data gathered in the current survey is consistent with the data collected by Schrock (1988). While the response rate was considerably lower (19.93%) in the current study than the response rate of the Schrock study (84%) the data was comparable, and was useful for program assessment and internal marketing. Chapter V will discuss the survey data in a comparison by survey topic, and present conclusions and recommendations for future usage of the on-line version of the SCE survey.

Chapter V

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Discussion of Data by Survey Topic

The information gathered by the On-line version of the SCE Adult Student Survey was comparable in terms of item response percentages to data obtained by the original Schrock 1988 study. The overall response rate of 19.93% was significantly lower when compared to Schrock's paper and pencil version response rate (84%), but the information proved to be just as useful. To demonstrate this, the discussion of the findings and how the data from the 2007 study compared to Schrock's 1988 paper and pencil survey, will follow the format set forth by Schrock (1988). The data from each study will be discussed according to the order of topics presented in the 2007 survey.

I. Decision to Attend University

Adult students surveyed in the 2007 study had similar reasons for attending university as did adult students surveyed in 1988. Both studies showed that students reported a variety of reasons to return to college, and both showed high rankings for career related items. Specifically, "To satisfy personal interest/self enrichment" (Item 1.1) was mentioned frequently in both versions of the survey (Table 1). If one considers the idea of improving one's occupational outlook as satisfying a personal interest, it may be that the distribution of responses was due to common factors among these items. The educational goals of adult students remained similar as well. In both studies, over half of the adult students reported a desire to complete a master's degree in five years.

II. Deciding to Attend EIU

The location of classes and availability of desired degree programs were the two highest ranked factors influencing adult student's decision to attend EIU in both surveys. A third factor which was important to adult students in both studies was the cost of tuition per class. With the current issue of rising fuel prices, items such as cost and location become cross factored. Having courses offered at convenient off campus locations reduces travel expense to the student, (Stilwell, 2008) thus making EIU courses more accessible. The addition of technology delivered courses can eliminate travel for the student entirely, and may be one reason for the popularity of this particular course format.

Respondents from both the 2007 Internet survey and the 1988 paper and pencil surveys indicated general satisfaction with the SCE off campus programs. The Internet version of the SCE survey found that adult students were most likely to hear about EIU extension classes from friends, relatives, or neighbors. Likewise, word of mouth was found to be the primary method adults learned about the off campus programs in 1988 as well. Both studies showed that adults rarely learned about the program from radio and newspaper advertisements.

III. Current Off campus Programs

One significant difference recorded in the data between the two studies was a 39.4% decrease in the number of students attending classes in Rantoul. In relation to the 39% decrease in the number of students enrolled in courses at Rantoul, there was a 41.8% increase in the number of students enrolled at Champaign (Parkland College). This was due to the closing of the military base in Rantoul. The EIU extension office which was

located there was moved to Champaign. A comparison of the data indicates clear migration and growth of the program in that area of the state.

There are some slight differences in the average number of miles traveled during the adult students' commute between the two studies. The data are more evenly distributed in the 2007 survey, and students were traveling slightly further then they did in 1988.

Weekday evening course meeting times from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. were the most desirable format for both the 2007 and 1988 surveys. A comparison of the data showed that adult students surveyed in 2007 generally wanted classes earlier in the evening than those surveyed in 1988. Students surveyed in both studies indicated that Saturday mornings, and Saturday afternoon are the most desired weekend class meeting times.

The data from both the Stenson 2007 survey and the Schrock 1988 survey showed adult students desire a variety of courses and subjects. However, adult students from both surveys ranked Education and Computer Technology courses as the top two subjects in which additional courses were needed. One subject that showed a substantial increase in ranking on the 2007 survey was Foreign Languages. Since the earlier survey society in general has moved toward a more global economic community (Pusser et al., 2007), thus the ability to speak a second language has become a significantly beneficial job skill.

Each survey asked adult students which additional services they would use if available, and respondents from both the 2007 and 1988 indicated that career management workshops would be the most useful to them. Time management workshops fell 12.5% from 1988 to 2007 to the 4th position and was the largest single difference for this survey item across the two administrations.

The employment status of the students remained the same from 1988 to 2007 with only a minor increase in the number of students enrolled full time. Most of the students surveyed by both studies worked full time and attended university part time. Additionally, students who indicated they used their personal savings dropped a difference of 11.7% from 49.7% in 1988 to 38% in 2007. Interestingly, the number of students using student loans increased 17.9%. More study into this survey item is warranted.

Conclusions

Overall, the Internet version of the SCE survey demonstrated that it produced the same quality of data as a paper and pencil version. This on-line method, while having a lower response rate, did generate useful data which was similar in comparison to the data gathered by Schrock (1988).

Recommendations

The present study was limited by a lack of focus groups. The addition of focus groups or panel members increases the response rate for on-line surveys (Manfreda et al. 2008). An aggregated analysis of the program by cohort, location and schedule type will provide a more comprehensive picture of the SCE programs.

An in-depth analysis of data collected from past administrations of the SCE survey is recommended if other campus agencies can be found that have data on file that survived the 2004 Blair Hall Fire. Additional items on the survey regarding the time spent on-line, and specifically the accessibility and usability of the technology used by EIU and the SCE, would aid in future survey solicitation methods (Manfreda, et al., 2008). An additional item regarding how the student learned of the survey would also aid

in targeting the solicitation method to appropriate populations within the SCE. A mixed method would increase response rate and ensure that a proper sample of the student population enrolled in off campus programs were surveyed. Giving survey respondents a choice of responding to a paper survey or completing the on-line version would allow for those who are familiar with on-line technologies and participating in on-line instruction to participate in the assessment process. Likewise those who are less comfortable with the Web survey would have the option to participate in a printable paper version (Manfreda, et al., 2008).

Given that the on-line survey proved useful it should be used to assess the SCE program more often. Administering the survey every 2 years rather than every 4 would generate more detailed longitudinal data. Also, regular submission of the survey data to university archives will eliminate the possibility of data loss due to fire or other structural damage.

Summary

The Internet version of the survey did indeed have a significantly lower response rate than the Schrock 1988 version but it was sufficient to be used as an assessment tool for the SCE. The data collected for the online survey is consistent with data collected from the previously administered paper and pencil survey. Additionally, students who were enrolled solely in Internet courses were offered the opportunity to participate. The information gathered from this study has helped to improve and market EIU's continuing education program.

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Appendix A

2007 SCE Survey

Deans' Revisions 3-23-06

Eastern Illinois University
School of Continuing Education
Student Survey
Fall 2006

Decision to Attend University

We would like to ask a few questions about your decision to enroll in the university as an adult and about your educational goals.

1. Which of the following reasons did you consider when you decided to enroll in university courses? (Please check as many as apply.)
 1. To satisfy personal interest/self enrichment _____
 2. To learn more about a new subject area _____
 3. To improve my present job skills _____
 4. To challenge my ability to learn _____
 5. To prepare for a new career _____
 6. To qualify for advancement in my present job _____
 7. To meet new people _____
 8. To prepare for retirement _____
 9. Other (please specify) _____

2. Which of the following reasons were the most important in your decision to enroll in university courses? (Please rank as many as apply in order of importance.)
 1. To satisfy personal interest/self enrichment _____
 2. To learn more about a new subject area _____
 3. To improve my present job skills _____
 4. To challenge my ability to learn _____
 5. To prepare for a new career _____
 6. To qualify for advancement in my present job _____
 7. To meet new people _____
 8. To prepare for retirement _____
 9. Other (please specify) _____

3. What is the highest educational goal that you hope to achieve in the next five years?

- Complete a Bachelor's Degree _____
- Complete an Educational Specialist Degree _____
- Complete a Master's Degree _____
- Study for a Doctorate Degree _____
- Undecided _____
- Not seeking a degree _____
- Other (please specify) _____

4. In what educational program are you currently enrolled?

- 1. Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) _____
- 2. Graduate degree in Education _____
- 3. Career & Organizational Studies (COS) _____
- 4. Elementary Ed./Bachelor of Science _____
- 5. Graduate degree in Technology (MIT) _____
- 6. Graduate degree in Business (MBA) _____
- 7. Non-degree graduate _____
- 8. Non-degree undergraduate _____
- 9. Other (please specify) _____

Decision to attend Eastern Illinois University

5. Several factors influence an adult learner's choice of a particular university. When you first

decided to attend Eastern Illinois University classes, what influenced your choice?
(Please indicate and rank which factors applied to you.)

- | | Apply? | Rank? |
|--|--------|-------|
| 1. Location of classes | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Cost of classes | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Availability of desired degree or program | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Eastern Illinois University's reputation | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Recommendations of friends | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Talking with EIU faculty, staff or students | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Prior experience with EIU | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Other (please specify) _____ | | |

6. How did your first find out about Eastern's off campus courses/programs?
(Please check only one.)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Website | _____ |
| 2. Friend, neighbor or relative | _____ |
| 3. Employer | _____ |
| 4. Personal research | _____ |
| 5. Eastern publication | _____ |
| 6. Newspaper article | _____ |
| 7. Newspaper advertisement | _____ |
| 8. Radio advertisement | _____ |
| 9. Television broadcast | _____ |
| 10. Movie theater | _____ |
| 11. Conference or institute | _____ |
| 12. Other (please specify) | _____ |

7. Which of the following most influenced your decision to attend EIU?
(Please check all that apply.)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Website | _____ |
| 2. Friend, neighbor or relative | _____ |
| 3. Employer | _____ |
| 4. Personal research | _____ |
| 5. Eastern publication | _____ |
| 6. Newspaper article | _____ |
| 7. Newspaper advertisement | _____ |
| 8. Radio advertisement | _____ |
| 9. Television broadcast | _____ |
| 10. Movie theater | _____ |
| 11. Conference or institute | _____ |
| 12. Other (please specify) | _____ |

Current Off Campus Programs

8. We would like to know your opinion of the off campus programs. Please indicate your rating of the following aspects of the continuing education program.

- | | Very
Good | Good | No
Opinion | Poor | Very
Poor |
|---|--------------|-------|---------------|-------|--------------|
| 1. Variety of classes offered | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Quality of classes offered | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Location of classes | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Classroom facilities (size, lighting, furnishings) | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Time classes are scheduled | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Length of class periods | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

7. Registration Procedures _____
8. Availability of accurate information about educational matters & services _____
9. Course descriptions contained in the schedule _____
10. Helpfulness of School of Continuing Education Off campus Program office _____
11. Helpfulness of Financial Aid Office _____
12. Helpfulness of specific program/dept. _____
13. Helpfulness of Graduate School _____
9. We would like your opinion regarding the location of classes. Please indicate the locations where you are attending classes this semester. (Please check all that apply.)
- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| _____ Burbank | _____ Effingham | _____ Mt. Zion |
| _____ Centralia | _____ Fairfield | _____ Olney |
| _____ Champaign | _____ Flora | _____ Pana |
| _____ Charleston | _____ Mattoon | _____ Rantoul |
| _____ Chicago area | _____ McLeansboro | _____ Robinson |
| _____ Danville | _____ Mt. Carmel | _____ Springfield |
| _____ Decatur | _____ Mt. Vernon | _____ Taylorville |
| Other _____ | | |
10. What is the farthest distance you commute one-way to attend an Eastern course?
- _____ Less than 15 miles
- _____ 15 to 30 miles
- _____ 31 to 45 miles
- _____ 46 to 60 miles
- _____ More than 60 miles
11. How far are you willing to travel one-way to attend class?
- _____ Less than 15 miles
- _____ 15 to 30 miles
- _____ 31 to 45 miles
- _____ 46 to 60 miles
- _____ More than 60 miles

12. Do you think Eastern should offer courses closer to you? If so, where?
13. Please rank your preference for course delivery from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least desirable and 5 being the most desirable.

☐ In-person classroom presentation on the EIU campus
☐ In-person classroom presentation in a convenient off campus location
☐ Combination of Internet and classroom instruction off campus
☐ Instruction completely via Internet
☐ Instruction completely via interactive television

14. Would you be interested in more distance learning classes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Please indicate student information services you would like to be available on the Internet. (Check all that apply.)

☐ Course description with class requirements and assignments
☐ Academic Advising appointments
☐ Admission to the University/Payment of admission fees
☐ Virtual learning assistance center
☐ Student/Faculty learning communities for current courses
☐ Faculty profiles
☐ Financial aid information
☐ Chat rooms for non-traditional students for personal or academic support
☐ Information for students with disabilities
☐ Other _____

15. Are the meeting times of your current course(s) acceptable?

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. When is the best time for you to attend classes on weekdays?

☐ 5:00 to 7:30 p.m.
☐ 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.
☐ 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.
☐ 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.
☐ 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.
☐ Other: _____

17. Would you be interested in enrolling in a course scheduled at the following times?

Saturday morning (9:00 – 11:30 a.m.)	_____ Yes	_____ No
Saturday afternoon	_____ Yes	_____ No
Sunday afternoon	_____ Yes	_____ No
Monday through Wednesday 7:00 a.m.	_____ Yes	_____ No
Monday through Wednesday 12:00 p.m.	_____ Yes	_____ No

18. Would you be interested in enrolling in courses offered in the following formats?

Weekend classes	_____ Yes	_____ No
Two-week classes	_____ Yes	_____ No
One week classes (meets every day)	_____ Yes	_____ No
Cohort group classes (same students move through a series of classes together)	_____ Yes	_____ No

19. Which of the following is more important to you in determining the number of classes in which you will enroll? (rank order)

_____ Total number of credit hours carried	_____ Cost
_____ Number of nights in class	

20. If classes were scheduled in late afternoon (beginning at 4:30 or 5:00 p.m.) and mid-evening (7:00 or 7:30 p.m.), would you be interested in taking two classes on the same evening? (Example: 4:00-6:30 and 7:00-9:30)

_____ Definitely yes
 _____ Probably yes
 _____ Undecided
 _____ Probably no
 _____ Definitely no

21. What types of courses so you think should be added to off campus course listings? Please indicate how important it is to you for Eastern to offer additional courses in the following subjects:

	Very Important	Important	No Opinion	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Education	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Computer/ Info. Technology	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Business	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Technology	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Math	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Psychology	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Social Sciences/ History	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Fine Arts/	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Humanities	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Public Relations	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
English	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Foreign Languages	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Physical Science	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
(Physics, Chemistry, Geology)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Life Science	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Physical Education	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

22. Please indicate your interest in seeing combinations of courses offered that would provide mini-majors, concentrations, minors, specializations, etc. that would be delivered in nontraditional formats.

____ Very Interested ____ Somewhat interested ____ No opinion ____ Not Interested

Additional Services Desired by Adult Learners

23. Which of these additional services would you use if they were available to you?

Time management workshop	____ Yes	____ No
Study skills workshop on site	____ Yes	____ No
Tutors on site	____ Yes	____ No
Career \management workshop	____ Yes	____ No
Financial aid workshop	____ Yes	____ No
Club/Support group for off campus	____ Yes	____ No
Continuing Education students		
Information regarding transferring to	____ Yes	____ No
EIU main campus programs		
Day care	____ Yes	____ No
Other _____		

Student Information

- 24 Gender: ____ Male ____ Female

25. Present age:

____ Under 25 years
 ____ 25 to 30 years
 ____ 31 to 35 years
 ____ 36 to 40 years
 ____ 41 to 45 years
 ____ 46 to 50 years
 ____ 50 years and older

26. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
(Please check all that apply)

☐ Employed full-time (40+ hours per week)
☐ Employed part-time (less than 40 hours per week)
☐ Employed, but considering a job/career change
☐ Full-time student
☐ Unemployed and seeking employment
☐ Unemployed and not seeking employment
☐ Retired
☐ Other _____

27. How many semester hours have you completed?

☐ 120 and above
☐ 91 to 120
☐ 61 to 90
☐ 31 to 60
☐ 0 to 30

28. What degrees have you completed?

☐ B.S. ☐ A.A.S. ☐ High School
☐ B.A. ☐ A.S. ☐ A.A.
Other _____

29. What is the major source of funding for your education at Eastern?

☐ Personal savings ☐ Loan
☐ Employer paid ☐ Assistantship
☐ Government funding ☐ Family member
☐ Other _____

30. Additional comments:

BGS Students Only: Please answer the following questions.

- | | Very
Satisfied | Satisfied | Not
Satisfied |
|---|-------------------|-----------|------------------|
| 31. I have found the Bachelor in
General Studies Program beneficial
to my career/professional goals. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 32. I have found the Bachelor in
General Studies Program staff to be
supportive and efficient in helping me
to complete my degree. | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Appendix B

Faculty letter.

Dear Colleague:

The School of Continuing Education would like to provide our students with an opportunity to help the School of Continuing Education further understand their needs, goals, and expectations as adult learners. In an effort to improve our services, we would greatly appreciate it if you would please direct your students to the School of Continuing Education Web site at: www.eiu.edu/~adulted to fill out a short 35 item student survey. The survey will be used exclusively by the School of Continuing Education, and all participants will remain anonymous. Please thank your students for their time, and inform them that we appreciate this important feedback. We want to receive their perspective!

Sincerely,

William C. Hine, Dean
School of Continuing Education